

# **POLICY AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK**

**Of The  
Missouri State Youth Advisory Board**

**“WE ARE THE VOICE OF  
THOSE WHO COUNT -  
THE FOSTER YOUTH OF  
MISSOURI”**

**Missouri Department of Social Services  
Division of Family Services**

**Developed by:  
Missouri State Youth Advisory Board  
1997-1998**

**Revised: December 2001**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Missouri State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) was established December 1992, with the first meeting being held on June 25, 1993. The SYAB meets on a quarterly basis. Each member of the board is an outstanding youth in foster care who represents other youth in his/her area of the state. Each area is allowed to have up to three (3) youth serve on the State Youth Advisory Board. The youth must be divided evenly between their Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialists, to assure that SYAB members are equally representing their specific area as related to geographical size. Recognizing that each SYAB member represents all children and youth who have/are in Out-of-Home placements, each SYAB member is responsible for providing Children's Services policy and procedural input to DFS administrative staff/Juvenile Court. The SYAB decides what goals and activities they want to pursue for upcoming meetings and carry those out accordingly. The SYAB also works as a network by bringing back important information to the Area Youth Advisory Board (AYAB), who in turn, take information back to ILP Specialists and youth in the ILP classes. When recommended to serve on the SYAB, the membership term is one (1) year, however, once a member, there are guidelines to follow in order to continue membership.

## **SYAB MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the SYAB is to empower Out-of-Home youth to provide input into the policies and procedures for Out-of-Home Care; to provide meaningful leadership training and experiences for board members; and to empower board members who, in turn, can empower children and youth who have experienced Out-of-Home Care.

## **RECRUITMENT, REQUIREMENTS, ORIENTATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

### **Recruitment**

- Interested youth shall submit an application to their AYAB.
- The youth must be nominated by their AYAB and Specialist.
- AYAB/SYAB members review and interview applicant.
- Each area has an alternate member available.

### **Requirements**

- To ensure equal representation, each area shall be represented by at least one youth per meeting.
- The youth must be a member of his/her AYAB.
- The youth must be age 16-21, but if turns 21 during the term, can finish the remainder of the term.
- The youth must either be an active participant of an ILP class with plans of graduating or be an ILP graduate.
- The youth must have a good attendance record for activities in which they are involved, such as ILP classes, AYAB meetings, school, work, etc.

- The youth must be performing adequately in school (according to case manager and foster parents or guardian).
- The youth must be willing to contact other youth in Missouri when necessary to get information and input on policy and programs.

### **Orientation**

- This handbook will be given to and read by potential SYAB members prior to attending the first meeting .
- At the first meeting, time will be allotted for a current SYAB member (to be assigned) to answer any questions the new member might have and to further explain the purpose and responsibilities of an SYAB member, if necessary.

## **MEMBER EXPECTATIONS**

- To be open-minded.
- To energetically participate in board activities by being active, fun, creative, dependable and motivated.
- To work hard and to reach goals.
- To be a positive role model for other youth.
- To be willing to share opinions, in a positive manners.
- To be supportive of and encouraging to other board members and youth.
- Upon acceptance to the SYAB, the selected youth is requested to make a verbal commitment to the board, to attend and be an active participant for their term.
- To represent all other youth who experience out-of-home care.

## **ELECTED OFFICIALS REQUIREMENTS**

### **Chair**

- Serves one year term.
- Must serve at least one year on the board before being considered for this position.
- Maintains order in the meeting.
- Recognizes speakers.
- Calls for votes.
- Communicates with other board members as needed in between meetings.
- Acts as a positive role model at all times.

### **Co-Chair**

- Serves one year term.
- Same general duties at chair.
- Fills in as Chair when Chair is absent.
- Option to take over as chair when term is up.

### **Scribe**

- Takes minutes.
- Prepares the meeting minutes.
- Types other information as needed.
- Takes attendance.
- Responsible for getting any materials needed (minutes, notes, typed materials) to their ILP Specialist or Coordinator.

### **Ex-Officio Members – (Effective September, 2002)**

- Up to three (3) non voting members per term.
- Do not have to be 21 years old to be nominated as an Ex-Officio.
- Appointed by the Division Director or Designee.
- A letter of interest must be submitted to the AYAB for consideration. Upon nomination by the Area YAB and ILP Specialist, a letter will be submitted to the Division Director by August 1<sup>st</sup> for approval and appointment.
- Serves no more than two (2) consecutive or non-consecutive one-year terms.
- Served at least a one-year term as a board member or alternate, within the last three (3) year.
- Must follow the same rules/guidelines as state board members.

### **COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

- Dedicated individuals from the community.
- Must be invited by state board members based on topic.
- No more than three community members per meeting.
- Understands and respects the guidelines that are adopted by state board members.
- Non voting member.

### **RULES**

- Each member must be committed and is responsible for attending quarterly and/or other meetings as scheduled by the SYAB.
- Health or an emergency situation shall be considered as an excused absence.
- If any SYAB member misses two (2) meetings in any one (1) year period, the SYAB will recommend to the appropriate ILP Specialist either possible dismissal from the board, or a probationary period, depending upon the reason(s) for the absences. If any SYAB member misses one (1) meeting without notifying their ILP Specialists or Coordinator, the SYAB will issue a letter of concern to that member regarding their absences with a copy to their ILP Specialist.
- If any SYAB member misses two (2) unexcused meetings in any one (1) year period and the member is voted off the board, the alternate member shall assume the remainder of the term.

- If any SYAB member misses two (2) excused meetings in any one (1) year period and the alternate has attended more than two meetings, the alternate member may be voted in as a regular member at the next September meeting.
- A member will be immediately removed from the board if they are adjudicated of a criminal offense. The alternate member will complete the remainder of the term.
- If the SYAB member is in Juvenile Court custody, he/she must have adult supervision while at meetings. If the youth is no longer in DFS custody, he/she is not required to have supervision during overnight stays;
- If members leave the SYAB, before their term is up, they are requested to submit a formal letter of resignation to the Board or the ILP Coordinator, signed by their ILP Specialist and send an alternate. If possible, notification to the SYAB is requested prior to the last meeting attended;
- Adhere to SYAB *Chaperone and Youth Travel Policy (Attached)*;

Independent Living Program (ILP) and  
State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB)  
Chaperone and Youth Travel Policy

Youth involved with the ILP program and/or the State and/or Area Youth Advisory Boards have occasion to travel to meetings, camps, conferences, etc. We are confident that a youth chosen for such privileges will exercise good judgment and avoid doing things in poor taste that would bring discredit to him/herself and others. Therefore, it is understood that the following policy will be observed when traveling to and from and during ILP activities. If there are questions the youth should ask his/her chaperone or ILP Specialist.

The chaperone is responsible for going over the travel policy with the youth to make sure everyone understands what is expected and to periodically check with the youth to make sure things are going well. The chaperone is also responsible to make sure the youth is in his/her room when it is time to sleep.

## **SAFETY ISSUES**

- Be cautious about talking to strangers. Never give your hotel room numbers or key to anyone. If someone you don't know knocks on your room door, contact your chaperone and/or the hotel front desk to verify whether or not it is safe to open the door.
- There is no mixed company allowed in rooms at any time.
- The use of alcoholic beverages and/or recreational drugs by chaperones or youth is strictly forbidden.
- Smokeless tobacco products are not allowed during activities.
- Always stay in a group during and after activities except when you are in your room.
- Read the instructions for fire safety on the back of the door in your room. If you smoke, do so only where smoking is designated. Never smoke in bed.
- All activities during free time should be discussed with specialists/chaperone.
- Observe designated curfews.

## **MEETING/ACTIVITY ISSUES**

- Follow the schedule. Be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there.
- BE ON TIME.
- Listen to presenters. Participates freely and actively.
- Ask questions.
- Be courteous of others in your group(s) at the activity. Introduce yourself to others around you when it is appropriate to do so.